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## ***“Home Heating Safety”***

If you plan to use a portable or fixed space heater this winter to offset high heating bills – use extreme caution. ***In the month of October 2009 alone, six (6) fire deaths in West Virginia are thought to have been caused by misuse or malfunction of space heaters.*** Last year in West Virginia, heating equipment fires ranked second only to cooking fires in terms of frequency, with 444 known heating fires comprising 14% of the state's reported 8,202 fires. (Cooking caused 19% of total fires.)

- Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fires in West Virginia during the months of December, January and February.
- ***All*** types of common space heating equipment are involved in home fires: portable electric heaters, portable kerosene heaters, wood stoves, fireplaces with inserts and room gas heaters.
- ***Central home heating systems are not a large part of the total heating fire problem, but space heaters are.*** Giving space heaters space – placing them three feet away from anything that can burn – and paying close attention whenever any supplemental heating device is in use can drastically reduce these types of fires.
- Room gas heaters, portable kerosene heaters and portable electric heaters have the greatest risk of death. Room gas heaters pose a similar risk of death from unvented carbon monoxide. Wood stoves or fireplaces with inserts have the greatest risk of property damage from fire.



### ***Leading reasons for fires starting with space heaters***

- Lack of regular cleaning, leading to creosote build-up in wood-burning devices and associated chimneys and connectors;
- Basic flaws in the construction or design of wood-burning heating equipments; and
- Fueling errors involving liquid- or gas-fueled heating equipment.



### ***Safety tips***

- When buying a new unit, make sure that a qualified technician installs the unit or checks that the unit has been installed properly, and that it carries the mark of an independent testing lab (such as Underwriters Laboratory--UL®). Look for safety features such as automatic shut-off if the heater is tipped over, and cool-to-touch design.
- For wood or coal stoves or fireplaces, have a professional inspect the chimney, chimney connector and other related equipment every year, and have them cleaned as often as the inspections indicate. Also, a sturdy screen will keep sparks from flying into the room.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn.
- Fuel portable kerosene heaters in a well-ventilated area away from flames or other heat sources, and only when the device has cooled completely. Use only the type of kerosene specified by the manufacturer, and never use gasoline.
- When turning a heating device on or off, follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Make sure any gas-fueled heating device is adequately ventilated. Unventilated gas space heaters in bedrooms or bathrooms must be small and wall-mounted.
- Never leave portable space heaters unattended. They should be turned off every time you leave the house or go to bed.

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For more information, go to: [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

[www.usfa.dhs.gov](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov)

[www.homesafetycouncil.org](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org)